

# WILD BLEAK BOHEMIA

**Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and  
Henry Kendall**

**An excerpt from a documentary by  
Michael Wilding**



On St Valentine's Day, 14 February 1867, the twenty-one year old Marcus Clarke wrote from Ledcourt Station in the Wimmera district of Western Victoria to his former school friend in England, Cyril Hopkins.

'You see that I am here yet, but I shall not be here next month. Where I shall go to is at present, with several other matters, "in the womb of time." "Tonight my heart is light, no dirge will I upraise," as Edgar Allan Poe says. My uncle is going to England upon his pension after next Christmas and wants me to go with him. I shall not go however; for I see nothing to be done at home and don't care, after choosing of my own accord to come out here, to return and confess that I have done no good by coming ...'

'An interval of several months elapsed before I received another letter from him,' Cyril recalled some forty years later in his biography of Clarke. 'When, at length one reached me, it bore the Melbourne postmark and was written on paper headed *Argus* Office. It ran as follows:

'My dear Cyril,

'Don't start at the address! I am now on the staff of *The Argus*, our chief paper here. I have just received your letters – about five in a bundle and must state reasons for not replying before.

'In the first place I have been three months up in the bush. In the second I have been down with ague-fever and all sorts of disorders. To explain: I left Holt's place and went up with five more fellows on an expedition to Queensland. I need not detail all the miserable failures. Suffice it to say that we lost about three hundred pounds each; that our horses died and our cattle were drowned by floods, that fever set in and that we were all taken ill. One poor devil, the Hungarian, Max Kabat, died and was buried in the bush. I reached

Adelaide in rags and, after waiting some time, got some money remitted and came up to town.

'The *Argus* people were in want of a theatrical critic and I accepted the post at a salary of three hundred a year. The life is well enough but at the end of the year I intend to come home and go in for authorship. I am sick of the bush and the colonies ... They want to keep me but I don't believe in staying ... People say that I look ten years older after this infernal Queensland business. I feel a hundred! ... I am afraid that this is a most stupid letter but I am not "i" the vein" ... I am so unwell and shaken that I cannot settle to anything and have to grind out my literary work at the cost of nervous tissue!...

'Write to me by every mail! You have no idea how your letters cheer me up! ... What a life I have had! Bank clerk, gold buyer, squatter, overlander, play writer, author and man of means! Share buyer and speculator too! *Vive la bagatelle!* If I had only saved the money I have made! Lord, what fools these mortals be!

'P.S. The enclosed are criticisms and reviews cut out at random; the "Balzac" and "Doré" are the only things worth a rap in a literary sense.'

Marcus Clarke was born on 24 April 1846 at 11 Leonard Place, Kensington. His mother, he wrote to Cyril, died when he was three years old. Her death certificate records: 'Amelia Elizabeth Clarke. Age: 26 years. Date: 13 March 1850. Place: 23 Notting Hill Terrace, Kensington. Cause of death: phthisis certified.' Phthisis was tuberculosis. At a later date he lived at 49 Gloucester Place, London, according to the address he wrote in his copy of Dryden's *Virgil*, now in the State Library of Victoria.

He was educated at Highgate school where he was a close friend of Cyril Hopkins and Cyril's elder brother Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hamilton Mackinnon, who knew Clarke over a fifteen year period in Australia, and wrote his biography in the 1884 *Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, quotes from a notebook with Gerard's description of the young Clarke: 'a kaleidoscopic, particoloured, harlequinesque, thaumatropic being.'

When Clarke was sixteen, his father was taken ill. 'Poor Clarke is on the voyage out to Australia, his father having met with a paralysis of the brain,' Gerard wrote to Ernest Hartley Coleridge, grandson of the poet, on 22 March 1863. Clarke was packed off to Australia. His father lingered on. His death certificate declares: 'William Hislop Clarke. Age: 56 years. Profession: Barrister at Law. Date: 1 December 1863. Place: Northumberland House Lunatic

Asylum. Cause of death: softening of the brain, several years certified. District: Stoke Newington, County of Middlesex.'

His father's second brother, James Langton Clarke, had emigrated to Victoria in 1855, setting up as a barrister in Little Collins Street, Melbourne. Since 1858 he had been a judge of the Court of Mines and of the County Court at Mount Ararat in Victoria. His father's eldest brother, Sir Andrew Clarke, had been governor of Western Australia from February 1846 till his death just a year later. Sir Andrew's son, also called Andrew, born in 1824, was commissioned in the Royal Engineers, and in 1846 posted to Van Diemen's Land where he was private secretary to Governor Denison for six years. In 1852 was appointed the first surveyor-general and chief commissioner of crown lands for Victoria, and member of parliament for Emerald Hill, positions he held until his return to England in 1858.

Andrew had been brought up in part by Marcus's father and uncle James while his own father was absent abroad on military duties, R. H. Vetch records in the *Life of Lieut.-General The Hon Sir Andrew Clarke*. Andrew corresponded regularly with Marcus's father from Australia. Vetch adds: 'When his uncle's health suddenly broke down, Andrew Clarke sent his uncle's only son Marcus out to Australia at his own expense and gave him a start in life.'

Marcus left from Plymouth on 16 March 1863. He arrived in Melbourne on 7 June, and promptly disappeared. Ian McLaren quotes documents preserved in the Melbourne Savage Club, in which, 10 June, Clarke's uncle James sent a telegram to Captain Standish, Chief Commissioner of Police: 'Marcus Andrew Clarke my nephew aged seventeen arrived by *Wellesley* from London on Sunday. Mr Lamoile, Criterion Hotel, St Kilda promised to go on board for him. Have heard nothing from either of them though I telegraphed Mr Lamoile yesterday. As he had three hundred pounds (£300) something may have happened to him. I am anxious to know if he is safe. Langton Clarke, Judge.'

The Chief Commissioner put out a memo to Superintendent Nicolson the same day: 'For immediate inquiry. Shd any information be procured this evening, I wish it to be sent to my private residence. Frederick Standish, C. C. P.' The following day Nicolson sent a memo for immediate delivery: 'The young man Marcus Andrew Clarke arrived at the Criterion Hotel last night with his luggage, and a letter to that effect was forwarded to Judge Clarke from the landlord by last night's post. M. A. Clarke left the hotel about noon today, having been invited out to dine.'

In his diary Captain Standish recorded dining with Judge Clarke over the years. Standish turns up from time to time in the following pages.



Judge Clarke was entrusted with looking after the young Marcus. Annie Baxter Dawbin records in her diary seeing 'Judge Clarke and his nephew' at the opera for a performance of *Le Prophète*, 26 June 1864.

Henry Gyles Turner recalled in Turner and Sutherland's *The Development of Australian Literature* in 1898: 'When his limited cash resources were at an end, his uncle sought to start him on the road to earn his own living, and through the good offices of his friend, David Macarthur, then superintendent of the Bank of Australasia, he procured him a probationary appointment.' Turner was born in Kensington in 1831, son of a tailor from Worcester. Educated at Poland Street Boys' Academy, he was apprenticed to the bookseller and publisher William Pickering in 1845, then joined the London Joint-Stock Bank in 1850. In 1854 he emigrated to Melbourne, and in 1864 at the age of 33 he had become chief accountant in the Bank of Australasia. Like Marcus, he had literary aspirations.

In the *Melbourne Review* in 1882 Turner described Marcus at work at the bank: 'He hated methodical book-keeping, and a column of figures was a weariness of flesh that would depress him for a whole day; he made the most ludicrous mistakes, and could never be got to realize the paramount importance of exact accuracy in pass-books or official returns. But, if he failed to satisfy the authorities, he was the life and soul of the office during his brief novitiate. With a ready faculty of easy versification, he was continually delighting his brother clerks with burlesque ballads and heroic verse upon the topics of the house, in which he satirized his companions or lampooned the ruling officials with equal indifference and daring. It came to be recognized in the office that a man who could write off tragic passages from *Æschylus* in the original, or turn some commonplace joke of the moment into excellent Horatian verse, ought not to be expected to write up pass-books; and so, rather than see Pegasus in harness, every clerk's hand was ready to help him at his work.'

A correspondent in the *South Australian Register*, 14 January 1885, recalled: 'I remember poor Marcus Clarke when he was in the Bank of Australasia, in which institution I was a clerk at the time. When he entered upon his duties as correspondence clerk we noticed and at the time greatly

admired the celerity with which he dispatched his business. Marcus was about the smartest man we had met in that department, and punctually as the clock struck four he would take up his hat and depart. This was all very well for a few days, and our admiration and reverence for this prince of correspondents daily increased. He would answer a letter which would take an ordinary man half an hour in composition in the space of five minutes, and he looked so happy and serene over the matter that we felt the duty was a downright pleasure to him. But it only lasted about three days, and then our little delusion vanished. We had a fearful time in that bank for weeks after. Every morning the manager, who was rather a pompous old gentleman, and very exacting in matters of business, would ask for the pleasure of Mr. Clarke's company in his private room for a few minutes. And daily the old gentleman's voice became more and more severe, and we would sometimes catch a glimpse of him with a letter in his hand, his face red as a turkeycock's, and apparently ready to go off in a fit of apoplexy. The fact was that the new correspondence clerk had answered the letters in a manner peculiarly his own, and had not trammelled his communications with much of the usual business etiquette or attention to accuracy. After the bank had been duly threatened with legal actions, and had been abused up hill and down dale, the manager one morning brought matters to a crisis, and gently suggested to Mr. Clarke that the bank would not view his resignation with any deep-seated regret – that it would, in fact, be glad to meet his wishes in that respect. "Resignation," said Marcus. "Certainly. Just my opinion. Give me a piece of paper;" and, without waiting further, he seized half a sheet of note-paper that lay upon the table, and hurriedly scribbled a very characteristic resignation; whilst the manager, completely knocked off his perch at his summary way of dealing with the question, sat back in his chair, speechless at his clerk's cool conduct. When the scribble was completed the writer handed it in, marched out, took up his hat, dusted it, and strolled pleasantly from the bank humming an operatic tune. Thus ended Marcus Clarke's connection with the bank.

Hamilton Mackinnon records Clarke's farewell encounter with the manager of the bank.

Clarke: 'I have come to ask, sir, whether you received my application for a few weeks' leave of absence.'

The Manager: 'I have, Mr. Clarke.'

Clarke: 'Will you grant it to me, sir?'

The Manager: 'Certainly, Mr. Clarke, and a longer leave, if you desire it.'

Clarke: 'I feel very much obliged, sir. How long may I extend it to, sir?'

The Manager: 'Indefinitely Mr. Clarke, if you do not object!'

Clarke gave his own account in an essay 'On Business Men': 'The manager sent for me, said that he loved me as his own brother, and that I wore the neatest waistcoats he had ever seen, but that my genius was evidently fettered in a bank. Here was a quarter's salary in advance, he had no fault to find – quite the reverse – but – but – well, in short, I was not a Business Man.'

Gerard Manley Hopkins' *Journals* contain an address for Marcus, as 'Hislop Clarke, c/- the Bank of Australasia, Melbourne' in a diary of 1864. But there is no record of any correspondence between them. Gerard had no fond recollections of his time at school, writing to Richard Watson Dixon years later, 5 October 1878: 'The truth is I had no love for my schooldays, and wished to banish the remembrance of them, even, I am ashamed to say, to the degree of neglecting some people who had been very kind to me.' Clarke seems to have been one of those he neglected.

Clarke's feelings about Highgate School were similar to Gerard's. Gerard's brother Cyril recalled of Clarke: 'He never professed to be very happy at school nor to have any particular affection for the majority of his schoolfellows.' Cyril is the only schoolfellow with whom Clarke is known to have maintained a correspondence. Clarke wrote on 'Speech Days and School Days,' in *The Australasian*, 28 December 1867: 'The happiest days of one's life one's school days? A thousand times no. I could tell such tales – but no, calm yourself, reader, I will restrain myself.'



Clarke was now sent jackarooing in Western Victoria where Judge Clarke had an interest in two sheep stations. Swinton, managed by Joseph Holt, was on the plains of the Dunmunkle Creek, a tributary of the Wimmera. The adjacent Ledcourt, managed by his brother John Holt, rose up into the Grampians.

Arthur Patchett Martin wrote of Clarke's time there in 'An Australian Novelist' in *Temple Bar* in 1884: 'It is said that Mr Holt, the squatter, used to tell how he debauched the unsophisticated minds of his boundary-riders, by reading to them the too realistic pages of the great Balzac. He was in the habit of propounding theories as to the proprietorship of land resembling those of Mr. Henry George, and which, it must be confessed, were not calculated to make those rude sons of toil contented with their lot.'

John Wallace, the Glenorchy post-master, an occupation he combined with shoe-repairing, told Hamilton Mackinnon: 'He was, moreover, an omnivorous reader, getting all the best English magazines and endless French novels from Melbourne regularly.'

Clarke portrays Wallace in his story 'An Up-country Township,' characterizing him as 'Mr. Rapersole, the boot-maker and correspondent of the *Quartzborough Chronicle*': 'There was a post-office in Bullocktown, kept, if a post-office can be kept, by Mr. Rapersole aforesaid, who was regarded as quite a literary genius by the bullock-drivers. Mr. R. "corresponded for the paper" – the paper – and would loftily crush anybody who gave him cause of offence.'

A quarter of a century later Wallace corresponded for the paper again with a series of reminiscences in the *Stawell Times*. C. E. Sayers reprinted some in his history of Stawell, *Shepherd's Gold*. Wallace gave a description of John Holt, 18 September 1889: 'a plain, quiet man dressed in orthodox style, Panama hat, trousers and jumper: rode a good horse, carried a heavy stock whip and usually had a couple of kangaroo dogs with him.'

9 April 1890 Wallace recalled Clarke: 'Marcus was hot-tempered and passionate. The bullock driver at Swinton was a fair hand at ordinary abjurations, but he stood appalled when Marcus began, after a quarrel with John Holt. It was such a queer medley of names of the heathen mythology and obsolete English phrases common enough in the time of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and other dramatists, and modern smutty language intermixed ... During the latter part of his time at Swinton very strained relations existed between him and Joseph Holt, so much so that Marcus instead of enjoying his leisure after supper on the station would walk to Glenorchy two miles and seek solace at one or other of the hotels, sometimes at the Glenorchy or the Royal, more often at the Royal Mail where at that time W. B. Pine was the landlord and a party could always be mustered there to play cards or relate yarns of which Pine had an infinite variety ... Marcus was a poor financier in those days, and managed always to outrun the constable, but then his credit was good and soon as he received his allowance from his uncle, Judge Clarke, he went round and squared his accounts. Judge Clarke was very fond and proud of his nephew ... After about a year's residence at Swinton Mr John Holt took Marcus to Ledcourt as an overseer there, where his long lonely rides through mountains and forest fostered poetic sentiments such as he has portrayed in "Pretty Dick" and other writings. His experiences at Ledcourt were beneficial to him in after life as an author. He had a two-roomed cottage and a Chinaman to cook for him ...'

Another contemporary provided Mackinnon with further information: 'From one who was a companion of his on the station at the time, viz., that most popular sportsman and genial, generous, good fellow, Donald Wallace, I have learned that though Clarke wrote almost every night he kept the product of his labor to himself.'

By March 1866 Clarke had begun publishing the product of his labour in the *Australian Monthly Magazine*, which had been established the previous September. Clarke contributed under both his own name, and as Mark Scrivener. The pseudonym was the invention of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Cyril Hopkins recalled: 'Whilst at school Marcus kept an album in which my brother inserted a paragraph describing a certain Marcus Scrivener (his nickname for Clarke adopted by the latter as a *nom de plume*).' The only thing in life he cared about, Clarke wrote to Cyril, was to 'become favourably known as an author.'

Clarke wrote to Cyril: 'I am glad; on the whole, I came out. One gets such an immense amount of humbug forced out of one by the force-pump of society here. I used to consider myself quite a small demigod in comparison with the natives but I have found out that there is a vast deal to be done before I can cry quits even with a Colonial ... I, you may remember, was always an effeminate looking, spoilt-boy sort of a fellow, and I am afraid am so still; but a certain amount of hare-brainedness (to coin a word) and *penchant* for devilry have carried me through.'

One skill he developed was horsemanship, often riding considerable distances. He told Cyril: 'I myself, who am but a poor horseman compared to some, can pick up my hat from the ground at full gallop ... I can also jump on and off my horse at full gallop.' He described how these feats were performed, adding: 'You may fancy I am boasting of my horsemanship. These things are considered nothing here.'

For a while he considered taking up land and becoming a squatter. However, Cyril remarks 'he had begun to feel he was not adapted to the pursuit of sheep-farming.' Captain Standish then offered Clarke the chance of an alternative, joining the mounted police. Cyril quotes a letter Clarke wrote to him about the offer: 'But though the billet is a good one I should have to go to some infernal hole on the border and perhaps get shot by some old "lag"! ... I may perhaps accept it. Heaven knows! ... You must not confuse the mounted troopers with the home police; they are quite another kind of cattle. The inspectors and superintendents are all gentlemen, most of them old army men,



and a troop is not by any means to be despised. One gets a house, a servant and four horses free; and in the non-settled districts is pretty well “monarch of all one surveys.”

‘Captain Standish, the chief, was in the Royal Horse Artillery and is a friend of my people at home. His offer is rather a compliment than otherwise. But there will be no station quarters, no comfortable escort duty, no government balls for me. I expect that I shall have to go “high up”, and may possibly even have the “Black Police” ... Needs must, however, when the old gentleman drives! I often wonder how my life will end; the beginning of it is strange enough, God knows! What a change from all my old plans and hopes; the Foreign Office, jollity, good society, hunters, crack balls and diplomacy!’

The mounted police over the years attracted a number of literary types, including the poets Richard Horne and Adam Lindsay Gordon, and the journalist and novelist George Walstab, all of whom Clarke came to know. Henry Kingsley was reputed to have enlisted, though this has been questioned.

Clara Aspinall recorded in *Three Years in Melbourne*: ‘There are many men of good family out in the colony, holding some of the best appointments in Victoria. The Chief Commissioner of Police is Captain Standish, a member of the ancient family of that name in Lancashire.’ Paul de Serville devotes a chapter of *Pounds and Pedigrees* to Standish’s career. Standish was a friend of Marcus’s cousin Andrew Clarke, who was the same age. Born in 1824, a younger son, Standish entered the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, in 1840, at the same time as Andrew Clarke. He was commissioned second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in 1843 and for a while was aide in waiting at Dublin castle. In 1852 he left England under an assumed name, Francis C. Selwyn, to avoid gambling debts, and spent a couple of years on the Victorian goldfields, prospecting unsuccessfully, and running a ginger beer establishment, which supplied sly grog.

There may have been a personal motive behind Captain Standish’s offer to Marcus, the reciprocation of a favour done to him some years earlier. When he first re-encountered Andrew Clarke in Australia, Standish was at very low ebb, impoverished, unemployed, and desperate. Standish recorded in his diary how, 12 October 1853, they talked ‘over old times at the RMA.’ 23 January 1854 Standish stayed the night at Merri Creek, Andrew’s house, where they ‘indulged in most pleasing reminiscences of the old days at Woolwich’. Standish had ‘a shakedown in the drawing room’ and ‘a jolly large tub’ the next morning. Andrew promised to urge his claims and successfully assisted him to become

Assistant Commissioner at Bendigo. It was a crucial stepping stone. In 1855 Standish was appointed Protector of the Chinese at Bendigo, and in 1857 Warden of the Gold Fields at Sandhurst. The following year he rose even higher. In *The People's Force: A History of the Victoria Police* (1986) Robert Haldane quotes Standish's diary, 20 August 1858: 'Heard about 4.30 that I had just been appointed by the Executive to the C. C. of Police.' He was now Chief Commissioner of Police in Victoria, a position he held until 1880.

While at Bendigo, De Serville notes, Standish, although born into a Roman Catholic family, became a freemason. Andrew Clarke may have been an influence here. In his *History of the Continent of Australia & the Island of Tasmania* (1877) Marcus Clarke records that Andrew Clarke had been appointed grand master of the English Constitution of the Melbourne freemasons in 1857. Standish became Provincial Grand Master of Victoria in 1861.

Standish noted in his diary that 27 December 1865 he dined with Judge Clarke 'and his nephew,' and that Marcus was one of five men he dined with 16 March 1866. In Clarke's account of 'A Day in Melbourne' which he sent Cyril Hopkins in 1865 there is a cameo of Standish playing billiards at the Port Phillip Club Hotel: 'See those two men playing now! One is Captain L'Encrier, the Chief Commissioner of Police, and the other is a rich squatter from the Western District. The Captain can beat him easily; see how he plays with him.'

'I believe,' Clara Aspinall remarked, 'that Standish was one of those who "stand high in public opinion."' Perhaps her brother, Butler Cole Aspinall, had not imparted the information to her that he gave to the journalist James Smith, who recorded in his diary, now in the Mitchell Library: 'Captain Standish – my informant adds – is furnished with a report every morning of the number and the names of those who have spent the night in the better class of brothels. The record must be a curious one and calculated to lift the veil from the secret immoralities of many of the outwardly moral and respectable.' Paul de Serville adds in *Pounds and Pedigrees*: 'In evidence which was suppressed, the parliamentary committee of inquiry into the police force heard an allegation that Standish had given a dinner at which the women present were naked and their chairs were covered in black velvet the better to show off the whiteness of their skin.'

In *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer* John Sadleir summed up Standish: 'His short service previously in the Royal Artillery did not seem to have left its mark upon him, for he showed few evidences of military training.

He belonged to a high-class English county family, had received a liberal education, and possessed many natural gifts that might have placed him in a higher position in public respect and favour than he ever reached. He was a man of wider views than his immediate predecessor and of fairer judgement. I doubt, however, whether he possessed as high a sense of duty. He was too much a man of pleasure to devote himself seriously to the work of his office, and his love of pleasure led him to form intimacies with some officers of like mind, and to think less of others who were much more worthy of regard.'

In his history of the Victoria Racing Club John Pacini quotes from Standish's obituary: 'He loved to gamble and lost a good deal of money ... It would be no exaggeration to say he was among the most knowledgeable and experienced racing men in Australia. Some years before becoming a foundation member of the VRC at Creswick's inaugural meeting he had been very much a driving force in the old Victoria Turf Club, one of the two racing clubs the VRC absorbed. The Melbourne Cup was entirely his idea. He had held almost every post there was to hold in the VRC – Committeeman, Handicapper, Steward, Treasurer and finally Chairman to say nothing of being the Club's most skilful race and programme framer.' The VRC runs the annual Standish Handicap in his honour to this day.



At the beginning of 1867, John Holt was visited by his friend Dr Robert Lewins, who had been staff-surgeon major to General Chute during the Maori wars in New Zealand, and was now on his way back to England. 'A learned though daring thinker of the Tyndall and Huxley school of philosophers,' Mackinnon describes him. Lewins befriended Marcus: 'Rapidly a mutual feeling of admiration and regard sprung up between the young literary enthusiast of twenty-one and the learned medico of sixty ... Dr. Lewins, on his return to Melbourne, told Mr. Lachlan Mackinnon, one of the proprietors of *The Argus*, with whom he was acquainted, of his discovery, advising him to secure the unknown genius for his journal. Mr. Mackinnon, having a high appreciation for the opinion of Dr. Lewins, followed the advice without hesitation.' Hamilton Mackinnon, who tells the story, was the nephew of the *Argus* proprietor.

Marcus had returned to Melbourne by June 1867 and was soon firmly launched on his literary career. As well as being on the staff of the daily *Argus* he contributed to their associated weekly magazine, *The Australasian*.

*The Argus* began publication in 1849 with liberal sympathies, but after the Eureka uprising it became the conservative paper associated with the

squatters' interests. Its current editor was Frederick William Haddon. Born in Croydon in 1839, Haddon had been recruited in London by two proprietors of *The Argus*, Edward Wilson and Mackinnon, and arrived in Melbourne in December 1863, the same year as Clarke. He was appointed foundation co-editor of *The Australasian* when it began publication on 1 October 1864, and from 1865 was the sole editor. 1 January 1867 he was appointed editor of *The Argus*.

Alexander Sutherland writes of *The Australasian* in *Victoria and its Metropolis*, comparing it with the *Leader*, the weekly companion to the more progressive *Age*: 'It made itself more distinctly a literary organ than the *Leader*, and soon attained an acknowledged position as the chief literary authority in Australia, occupying in regard to the colonies somewhat the same position as that occupied by the *Spectator* and *Athenæum* in England.' De Serville describes it as 'very much the clubman's paper.' Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall began publishing there in 1866, Clarke in 1867. It provided a regular venue for their work. *The Australasian* continued publication until 1946, when it was reconstituted as *The Australasian Post*, which survived until January 2002.

It was in *The Australasian* that the two articles Clarke sent to Cyril Hopkins appeared, 'Balzac and Modern French Literature' on 3 August 1867 and 'Popular Art and Gustave Doré' on 28 September. They drew on a couple of his enthusiasms. The Catalogue of Clarke's library lists the forty volume collected edition of Balzac's *Comédie humaine* (1842-48), and *Les Contes Drolatiques* illustrated with 2000 engravings by Gustave Doré, and, also illustrated by Doré, *Historical Cartoons*, Dante's *Inferno*, *The History of Croque Mitaine, or the Chivalric times of Charlemagne* and *The Fables of La Fontaine*. In letters to Cyril, Clarke wrote of reading Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet*, *Gobseck*, *La recherche de l'absolu* and *Le père Goriot* and in his writings he refers to *La Peau de Chagrin*, *La Fausse Maitresse*, and *Le Succube*. The journalist Bland sighs 'with lost illusions' in Clarke's first novel, *Long Odds*.

Balzac, Clarke's favourite novelist, provided him with an awful warning about the literary life, and he followed it to the letter. He wrote of Balzac: 'The struggle for fame and bread killed him. The pages of his finest works are written with his life-blood. To the easy-going *dilettante* author who thinks to stop into fame and name without an effort, the life of Balzac will seem terrible. It was one long struggle with debt and difficulty.'

Clarke soon attracted notice with his report of 'The Melbourne Spring Meeting' in *The Argus*, 4 November 1867, focussing on the crowd rather than

the horses: 'Young ladies, oily as to their hair, pulpy as to their lips, and heavy as to their noses, were alternately watching the course and casting stolen glances of admiration at the magnificent attire of Anonyma. Anonyma and her sisters were not in force on Saturday. It is the fashion to assign to these unfortunates a much more prominent position in all merrymakings than they really occupy ... Round the judge's corner the ladies mustered in throngs, the 'Nymphs of Solyma' being in the ascendant, and the air was darkened with the shadow of the noses of the daughters of Judah.'

This, Mackinnon recalls, 'created quite a sensation, and brought down upon *The Argus* an indignant howl from the Jewish residents of Melbourne ... The matter however was explained away as an editorial oversight, and so the indignant race was satisfied and the writer censured, but not dismissed, as, although of little value as a reporter, he was invaluable as a writer.'

The article has been adduced to argue that Clarke was anti-Semitic. Nonetheless at this early stage of his career he was sharing accommodation with Alfred Telo who became a lifelong friend, and is generally said to have been Jewish.

Mackinnon remarks: 'Telo was a widely-read man in a variety of tongues, being master of most of the European languages, including Russian, from which country he was understood to have originally come, although this was, even to his friends, greatly a conjecture, as he was, in keeping with his Semitic descent, always very reticent about the subject.'

A correspondent in *The Bulletin*, Fuimus, recalled, 27 April 1901: 'Alfred Telo was born at Archangel, in Russia. His father was a wealthy merchant, and afterwards moved to Liverpool. In early life Telo was an attaché with one of the British Embassies on the Continent; later on, he became a lieutenant in a Prussian regiment of Guards, from which he retired owing to having had one of his thighs badly broken in a fall. He was dead-lame all his life, and his gait was quite a marked feature of his personality. Of Hebrew extraction possibly; but even at that, neither Spanish by birth nor descent.'

Clarke describes these early years in his obituary of Telo in the *Leader*, 11 October 1879: 'Alfred Telo was the first literary man whose acquaintance I made in Melbourne, and we lived in chambers together. I had just abandoned the elegant occupation of working overseer on a station in the mallee at £40 a year and "my tucker," for the scarcely less cheerful situation of reporter on a Melbourne daily at 30 shillings a week. Alfred Telo lived over a sewing machine shop in Collins Street, the proud possessor of a suite of three rooms. I flung my

30 shillings a week into the ménage, and sent my modest trunk into the back attic.'

The £300 a year that Clarke told Cyril Hopkins he was earning is twice the salary he gives here. Perhaps when he became a theatre critic and a columnist he earned more.

Clarke recalled of Telo: 'As a matter of course the wildest legends were afloat concerning the man of mystery. He had been a Russian spy. He had been a diplomatic agent. He had lived at St Cloud. He had worked in the mines. He had been a courier. He had been the husband of a countess ... He had a habit of stroking his beard, of winking, of playing a sort of fantastic *moro* with flashing fingers (*digitos micantes*) in the air, while you hung upon his lips for a reply. He never began a sentence without apologizing for the end of it, and would relate an anecdote calculated to make your hair stand on end in a succession of fragments, which had to be afterwards pieced together like a Chinese puzzle. "Look here – of course – the Queen of Spain – I don't mean to say – as I told Cortchakoff – not that I intend – murdered in his bed – that is – you understand – Well, Palmerston – I mean to say – but, however," and so on.'

In 'Cannabis Indica' in the *Colonial Monthly*, February 1868, Clarke described something of the chambers they shared: 'The room is oblong, with two windows fronting the street; the door is opposite to the windows. A fireplace, with mantelshelf and looking-glass is at one end of the chamber, and a bookcase at the other. Over the looking-glass is a mezzotint engraving of an Italian monk, the face being of a strange and startlingly lifelike nature. A large engraving of Martin's "Palace of Satan" occupies the place of honour over the bookcase, and on each side are two engravings, after Holbein, descriptive of the entrance of Death among a party of revelers, and Death tolling a bell in a church tower. On one side of the fireplace is a writing table loaded with books and papers, and on the wall above it hangs a chromolithograph of one of Birket Foster's woodland pieces. On the wall, fronting the window is another low bookcase, with two Art Union Parian statues, one a bust, "Clyte," the other "The Dancing Girl." Above them is a water-colour picture, by Cattermole, of a party of Breton peasants riding by the sea shore. On the mantelshelf is a French clock, surmounted by a statue of the Indian Bacchus, in bronze, and a sea piece hangs between the windows. A table in the centre of the room was covered with books, among which I noticed *Les Contes Drolatiques* of Balzac, Montaigne's *Essays* translated by Hazlitt, Doré's *Dante*, several numbers of the *Journal Amusant*, some *Saturday Reviews*, and an illustrated edition of Keats.'



Adam Lindsay Gordon's father Captain Adam Durnford Gordon was born in Worcester in 1796, and entered the army. He served in Barbados and with the Bengal Cavalry of the East India company. He married his first cousin Harriet, daughter of Robert Gordon, Governor of Berbice, at Paris in 1829 and in 1831 they went to live at Fayal in the Azores. Adam Lindsay Gordon was born there, 19 October 1833. Harriet inherited a considerable income from her father's West Indian plantations, until the abolition of slavery in 1833 removed the source of wealth. Edith Humphris in her biography of the poet notes that 'both were grandchildren of a prosperous wine-merchant, Robert Gordon, Laird of Hallhead and Esslemont and his wife the Lady Henrietta (born Gordon), daughter of the second Earl of Aberdeen and granddaughter of the second Duke of Gordon, while their pedigree went right back to the cruel and notorious Edom o' Gordon of the old ballad.'

In 1840 the Gordons settled in Cheltenham and in 1846 Captain Gordon took up a position at the newly founded Cheltenham College as a teacher of Hindustani. Alexander Sutherland writes in Turner and Sutherland's *The Development of Australian Literature*: 'Mrs. Gordon showed signs of mental aberration; melancholia of a mild religious form had marked her victim. Her doctors advised a change of climate.' For the rest of her life she travelled around Europe, occasionally returning to England.

Cheltenham was the home of steeplechase racing and Gordon developed an enthusiasm for the sport. He also developed an unreciprocated romance with Jane Bridges, a 'farmer's daughter' as his father contemptuously put it from Worcestershire. Gordon writes to his Worcester friend Charley Walker: 'I was breakfasting with the Governor when a row began in a curious way rather. I'll relate it.

"You don't seem in a mood for breakfast this morning," says he, when I refused some eggs and ham.

"Not much," says I, "'you ought to have seen me a week or so ago, eating Cochin China eggs."

"Was that when you stopped a week in the country?" says he.

'I stared at him a bit and said yes.

"You'd got a good-looking lady to make tea perhaps," says he in his sarcastic manner.

I was a bit surprised, but keeping cool assured him, as he was so inquisitive, that he was right or thereabouts.

“Ah,” said he in the same tone, “I suppose that was the farmer’s daughter your uncle says you’ve been hanging after.”

‘This pulled me up and I felt myself getting a little warm, partly with surprise and partly with annoyance, however, I made answer in this form.

“I don’t know,” says I, “what gammon my uncle may have swallowed, but at all events she’s better than your precious son-in-law that is to be. I think,” I said, “you’ve studied my sister’s interests nicely by letting her have her way.”

“Well,” said he, with his usual coolness, “I suppose I’m to thank you for a daughter-in-law soon of another stamp.”

“Never you fear, Governor,” says I, speaking loud as I do when I get angry, “you may make your mind at rest on that score, for a damned good reason why, even supposing I wanted her, she wouldn’t have me, tho’ I am the Honble. Capt. Gordon’s son, so,” says I, “write and thank her for it. You ought to be much obliged to her, if I’m not!”

‘And I walked out and shut the door.

‘It put the old boy in such a rage that next opportunity he set to to abuse me about a bill which came in for me, and gave him an excuse, and we had an awful row – worse luck to it.’



Gordon was then at his third, and last, school. He seems to have been removed summarily from all of them. He had been enrolled at Cheltenham College 1841-2, and at the Royal Military College, Woolwich, 1848-51. In 1852 he attended the Royal Grammar School, Worcester for eighteen months, living at his uncle Robert Cumming Hamilton Gordon’s house, 8 Green Hill Place, London Road, Worcester, some twenty miles from Cheltenham.

And now occurred the event of the steeplechase which, Alexander Sutherland wrote of Gordon in the *Melbourne Review* in 1883, ‘compelled him to leave the country.’

Mrs Elizabeth A. Lauder, who as a young girl, Annie Bright, knew Gordon in the 1860s, told the *Record*, 25 June 1910: ‘the following is absolutely true, being told by himself to the Bright family. He was attending a



military college and often took part in amateur race meetings. On one occasion he was first favourite, and his colleagues (or many of them), were backing his mount; but as the day drew nigh the horse's owner gave orders that the animal was not to be taken out of the stable. Young Gordon was disappointed and rather for his friends' sake, and listening to unwise counsel, went to the stable, took the horse, rode, and won the race, only to find the owner and a policeman watching for him as he dismounted after passing the winning post. It was with some difficulty his father kept him from the clutches of the law, but it ended in Gordon being sent out to South Australia.'

It is generally agreed that the event took place when Gordon was at the Royal Grammar School, Worcester, not the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. In 'Adam Lindsay Gordon. Some Early Memories', *The Argus* reported, 2 March 1912, on a lecture by Douglas Sladen: 'With regard to the circumstances under which Gordon left England, Mr. Sladen says that statements hitherto accepted require modification, as he has learned from Gordon's cousin, Miss Frances Gordon, who knew him better than anyone else, because he stayed a great deal with her father, at Worcester, and he lived with his own father for a long period in Worcester, quite close to her father's house. "She tells me," (proceeds Mr. Sladen) "that it is a mistake to think that Lindsay Gordon went to Australia in disgrace. His family had no wish for him to go. He went because he was a courageous, romantic, and adventurous young man, whose mind was inflamed with the stories of the great gold rush. He said, as it were, to himself, 'Australia is the place for me.'"'

Sladen then concluded: 'The Lalla Rookh episode is believed to have happened at Worcester. The Plough Inn is selected as the place into which Gordon broke to take the mare to ride in a steeplechase, which he is understood to have won. The accepted account is that he had paid £5 to the owner to be allowed to ride it in that steeplechase, but that the owner owed £30, and, his creditor having obtained an execution for the money, a lock was put on the door of the stable, and the horse handed over to the bailiff. As Gordon had paid his £5, he did not see why he should not ride the horse. It is said that Gordon's father had to pay so much for quashing the proceedings that he packed Gordon out to Australia, in his wrath, or to appease the wrath of his wife. Now, if proceedings had been begun, no amount of money could have bought over the court, and the horse's value would be enhanced by winning the race. In any case, we have Miss Frances Gordon's authority for the fact that her cousin Lindsay was never in disgrace with his family. She says that his father

was rather proud of his escapades, except that they involved him in expenses which he could not afford.'

In *Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia* Edith Humphris and Douglas Sladen name the horse Lalla Rookh, while citing the 1852 *Steeplechase Calendar* in which it was often entered as Louisa. They cite the *Calendar* for 11 May, commenting 'this was the time Gordon stole her out of the stable': 'at *Worcestershire Hunt Meeting*, *Crowle* won a 4 miles steeplechase. Entered and ridden by Mr. Walker. 5 ran.'

But what the horse was called, and whether ridden by Gordon or Walker, and whether the sheriff, the police or the owner were waiting at the finishing post, remains impossible to establish from the enigmatic report in *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 12 May 1852: 'The gallant master of the Worcestershire hounds, anxious to make a demonstration at the termination of the Hunt, and also to afford some sport in his immediate neighbourhood, caused a gathering yesterday on the Crowle estate and immediately opposite his mansion, by having amateur steeplechases, which proved extremely gratifying to parties living in the vicinity, and also to many of the citizens of Worcester, who attended. Three good races were the result, over a course comprising about three miles of fair hunting country. For the first of these five horses started, for the second seven, and for the third, five. Horses were entered in fictitious, and the riders rode under assumed names, so we may be excused from entering into a detailed statement of winners or losers.'

Gordon wrote to Charley Walker about the decision to send him away: 'I've had some talk with the Governor, and seriously he means packing me off in a month if he can, but I'm not quite sure I mean going. *Don't tell anyone of this or I shall have no peace*, he had a letter from the India House, and I shall not be able to get an appointment in India for a long time. I suppose he thinks I can't be kept quiet here, and he's about right. It will be the best thing I've no doubt, and I don't dislike the idea. I long to begin the world afresh as it were ... The Governor has got an offer of an appointment as officer in (what should you think?) the Mounted Police in Australia, devilish good pay, a horse, three suits of regimentals yearly and lots of grub, for me of course, I don't mean for himself, and he wants me to take it. I think I shall, in fact it's no use mincing the matter, I know *I must*, but I must do something before I start to make my friends remember me, rob somebody or something equally notorious.'

A later letter to Charley details the arrangements: 'While I was having my tea in the kitchen the Governor came downstairs and we had some talk. I asked

if he'd taken my passage, and told him I was ready to go and the sooner the better, adding that there was no good shivering on the brink when one plunge would make it over. He was very pleased to hear me speak so, and said that he had the best letters of introduction possible for me, one to the Governor of Adelaide and one to General Campbell, also to Dundee and Ashwin, and he added that I should have a first-rate outfit and that he would lodge some money in the Adelaide bank for me, and concluded by saying that whatever I wanted before I went I could have, and what money I liked. I drew a long breath as he went out, and felt for a moment that choking sensation of sorrow which a man experiences when he knows all the hopes he's cherished are scattered and blighted for ever; you know the sensation, perhaps, Charley, when one feels as if the air one breathed in was like liquid lead, but I swallowed it somehow, and turning away from the remains of my meal, gave vent to a long whistle and lit my pipe. The Governor will be jolly glad to get rid of me, for though he's really fond enough of me he can't bear to see me going on so, a bye-word in the family, as he expressed it. He said once he'd sooner see me in my grave, and I don't know but what I felt much the same thing myself sometimes. But it's a great blessing to be able to get away from such localities and societies as I've frequented, and I have little to care about leaving *now*, to say nothing of the extreme minuteness of the loss I shall be to society; doubtless a few duns will make a passing inquiry after my welfare, but except by them there's no one whose exit will be felt so little. I'm tolerably jolly on the whole at the prospect, for I shall come back in two years and sooner if I dislike the place; directly our affairs get a bit settled the Governor says I can come back.'



Many years later Jane Bridges wrote to J. Howlett-Ross, who published her letter in *The Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial Volume*, edited by Edward A. Vidler: 'I see no reason why the simple story of his pure and boyish love should be left untold forever, as there is nothing in it dishonouring to either of us, and when I have told you all about it you will see that shyness and reserve formed part of his character before he had experienced the vicissitudes of his Australian life. He was introduced into our farm home by my brother one day on his way from hunting; my father, who was a genial man, told him to call again when he came that way. He took to calling frequently, the ride over being only five miles ...'

The farm was at Broughton Hackett, and still stands.

'He was less shy with my sister than with other girls, and openly expressed his admiration of her personal appearance, and used to say that at

Holyoake's dance, though the youngest, she was by far the handsomest girl in the room. He was continually quarrelling and making friends with her, and I really thought he loved her a little ... She was only fifteen years old; he and I were eighteen and nineteen, or a little more. I considered myself very womanly. He always brought his grievances to me, and seemed to listen to, and act upon, my advice; all his caricatures and verses came to me first and he brought me an excellent full-length caricature of himself, which I had for many years with several others.

'We were all surprised and sorry when we heard that Lindsay was going to Australia. He was very depressed, and certainly evinced no sign of having "gold fever".'

Jane went on to tell how 'one morning (either on the day he left Worcester or the preceding one) I was just dressed for a drive with my father, when I was told that Mr. Gordon wished to see me. When I entered the room in which he was he did not come forward to greet me nor speak, and I stood looking inquiringly at him. After what seemed a long time he said abruptly: "I came to say good-bye."

'I told him I was very sorry, as we all were, to lose him; we all liked him so much.

'Then he said without looking up, "If you will say one word, I won't go."

'I asked him what word?

'He replied, "Stay."

'Then he told me in short sentences how he would work; he would do whatever his father required of him; be whatever he wished; that he never intended to tell me "he loved me", but now "he could not help it."

Quite unprepared for this, Jane could not think what to say. But when Gordon misinterpreted her silence and came towards her 'I told him to wait a moment; that I could not say one word to deceive him; that I must confess to him what I had scarcely owned to myself; that I loved another.

'I said, "Keep my secret, as I will keep yours."

He replied, "I have no secret. I told Charlie; my sister, too, knows. *I told my mother, and that is why I am being sent off.*"

'I asked why he had so carefully concealed from me what he had told others.

'He said. "Because I feared you would ridicule me, or shun me, or both."

'I told him I would have written to his mother and assured her she had nothing to fear from me; that "even now it is not too late."

'He said, "Now I know what you have told me, it is all over with me; I may as well be in Australia as anywhere else."

'During our conversation he had been turning a silver pen-holder from one hand to the other. When I offered him my hand he placed the pen in it, asking me to write to him. I hesitated to take the gift, or to promise.

'He said, "I will not deceive myself; send me a few lines as a friend, now and then; take the pen to remind you of me." Seeing that I was agitated, he said, "I have been a selfish fool to distress you; forgive me." He covered my hands with kisses, the first and last he ever gave me. So our love-making began and ended in a few brief moments, though the course of our lives was changed for ever by it.'



4 August, 1853 Gordon wrote in 'To My Sister':

My parents bid me cross the flood,  
                                   My kindred frowned at me;  
 They say I have belied my blood,  
                                   And stained my pedigree.

7 August 1853, aged nineteen, he left England on the barque *Julia*.

I shed no tears at quitting home,  
 Nor will I shed them now!

he wrote in 'An Exile's Farewell' in a lady's album on board. Years later the owner of the album happened to read Arthur Patchett Martin's article on Gordon in *Temple Bar*, February 1884. It was the first she knew of the young man's later poetic career, and she sent the poem to Martin who published it in *Temple Bar* that April.

The story often told by his biographers is that when Gordon arrived in South Australia, 14 November, he made no use of the letters of introduction he carried. Indeed, there is a story that he threw them overboard before the ship

docked and three days later, rejecting his family background, chose to enlist as a trooper, rather than an officer, in the Mounted Police. But the truth is different. In 'The Friend of Charley Walker' Brian Elliott printed some letters of Gordon's to Charley from Adelaide: 'Some friends of my father's who have good standing here received me on my arrival and treated me with every kindness. I often go and see them now in the evenings.'

A letter from A. C. Ashwin in the W. Park Low papers in the State Library of South Australia recalls: 'Gordon and my father (A. J. Ashwin) were school fellows in Cheltenham, England, and when Gordon landed in Adelaide my father met him and brought him to our home in North Adelaide to live with us, which he did until he joined the police force. I can remember when he was a Mounted Trooper schooling police horses to jump fences, and when he used to come to see my parents I can remember seeing him jump the white picket gate into the yard and jump out again when leaving.'

The *Advertiser* 21 October 1933 published a letter Gordon's father wrote to Ashwin, 3 March 1854: 'I cannot deny myself the pleasure of sending the thanks of Mrs Gordon and myself for your very great kindness to our son, Lindsay, on his arrival among you. He tells us how kind you and your brother were, and how pleasant you made his first acquaintance with your Dominion. Your kindness could hardly have been better bestowed, for he is one of the most careless and helpless of God's creatures, but, I hope, neither devoid of intelligence nor of high spirits, and should occasion require will prove a gallant defender of your prosperous community. His pleasant expression, "I feel myself as lively as a kitten" makes one long to be among you.'

Gordon applied to join the Mounted Police, 7 November, and 24 November, ten days after his arrival, was accepted.

He wrote to Charley from the Mounted Constables Barracks: 'We have an easy billet of it here, whether a man likes a position depends more on himself than anyone but we have fine times of it really. The Mounted Police are all well mounted and well armed in a sort of undress cavalry uniform and they are armed with carbines, pistols and long dragoon swords. I was very near getting an inspectorship or captaincy but the rules compel a man properly speaking to serve as a trooper, many of our young fellows are gentlemen though not all and capital fellows some of them are, but talk about roughing it here, why Charley I've roughed it more along with you than half these colonial chaps have ever done. In this climate anyone can sleep in the open and in spite of the heat any man can work, at least I can, better than at home as the air is as clear and fresh that if you perspire as I do profusely you do not feel the heat.'

In 'Adam Lindsay Gordon: a small discovery' Brian Elliott notes how Alexander Tolmer, who became Chief Commissioner of Police, recalled Gordon in his *Reminiscences of an Adventurous and Chequered Career at Home and at the Antipodes*: 'I well remember when he first arrived in Adelaide ... He applied to me for the post of inspector of Mounted Police, and, in support of his application submitted a number of very flattering testimonials, which I forwarded to the Government, strongly recommending him for one of the district inspectorships about to be created; but the Government rejected his application. Upon intimating his ill success, I advised him to join as a trooper (unless he had something better in view), which he accordingly did, and shortly afterwards volunteered to act as my groom on account of having taken an extraordinary liking to my horse.'

In *The Australasian*, 14 July 1906, Owen Meylett recorded some recollections of Gordon from Tolmer's son, Horace: 'He was very dark complexioned, and wore a small dark moustache. He was very reserved and was always known as "Mysterious Gordon." When he first joined the police he had a large wooden box which he always kept locked. One day the men in barracks, who had long speculated as to what it might contain, found it unlocked. It was half-full of racing paraphernalia, top-boots, saddles, martingales, training horse-clothing, whips, racing colours, etc. It was soon discovered that he was a splendid cross-country rider. He used to take a magnificent bay horse named Saunders out to the inspector's house at Norwood. The men always turned out to see him start, for he invariably went straight as the crow flies over five or six fences. The inspector was accustomed to inquire what had heated the horse, and Gordon's answer was that "he had been a bit fretful." Gordon was very unsociable, had no chums amongst the men, and hardly ever talked.'

Edwin Gordon Blackmore recalled in the *Age*, 3 June 1899: 'My old friend, the late George Hamilton, was chief inspector of the troopers, and resided in the barracks on North Terrace in those days. He had about the finest weight carrying horse, for power, substance and quality combined, I ever saw. Being a capital artist, a really good water colour portrait of this horse, his own handiwork, hung over the mantelpiece in his sitting room. He told me he used to send Gordon out to exercise him, and he could never understand how it was the horse always returned to stables looking as if he had been doing strong work. The fact was, as he afterwards learned, that no sooner were the horse and rider clear of the town than they had a go cross country, for which the very sparsely settled suburbs afforded excellent opportunities. It was all good honest timber in those days. The curse of wired had not fallen upon the land.'

Gordon wrote to Charley Walker: 'I hope to get out in the country when I get my uniform and horse. I now ride the inspector's horse for him and take him up to his house about two miles out in the country in the morning ditto fetch him back at night he is called one of the best nags in the colony and is a useful kind of nag but a bolter having run away with several chaps who have ridden him of course he has not with me and I have discovered that he is a very clever fencer so I always take a short cut to our inspector's, sometimes I have to take the under inspector's horse too and sometimes the commissioner's too making three at a time. Then I ride one and lead the other two but this rarely happens. I have only been a short time in the force but am getting on well. I drink very little though I smoke a good deal. We get good pay and live like fighting cocks. I am in better health than I ever was before. Regular meals and good rest, on board ship, with the stoppage of dissipations made me quite fat and a few days exercise after landing set me quite straight I feel now like a new man and am besides turned as steady as a judge comparatively. I have qualified myself in the corps as a fairish rider. The chaps out here ride in a rough way but not well and I have an offer of a mount in the hurdle race which comes off at the summer meeting the 29<sup>th</sup> of December. I do not know if I shall accept, but probably I may.'



November 1854 Gordon described something of his work to Charley Walker: 'I am tired tonight as I have been watching a prisoner lately. We have no cells at the station, which is, in fact, only a settler's hut, and my handcuffs would not go on his wrists. I apprehended him on a warrant for horse-stealing, but I do not think the charge can be proved though it is clear enough. He is a rough customer, a fighting man, and as strong as a bullock, but men out here are not scientific fighters, and he is rather shy of me. He was bouncing when I first took him, and on arriving at the station here I showed him an old pair of boxing gloves and he put them on. We set to and I proved a bit too long in the reach for him; in a rally, the last round he caught me in the body, the only fair blow I got, and nearly stopped my breath, but I took him at the same instant between the eyes a right-hander with all my strength and floored him. I have the reputation of a *good man* about here, but more by *hearsay and report* than anything else, though I did polish off one chap well, but most of these rough bushmen are so horrid, strong and heavy that it requires all the efforts of superior science and determination to beat them.'

He concluded: 'We have a jolly life rather out here. When at home we are our



own masters and can lounge and smoke or make ourselves tidy and ride about at leisure, and when going round the country you have only to fancy yourself a moss trooper of the olden time and your situation is quite romantic.'

Gordon was based principally at Penola, near the Victorian border. The Penola Police Journal survives and records his duties there in 1855. Around this time Gordon met Edward Bright, Ned of 'The Sick Stockrider' according to Humphris and Sladen: 'He and his brother John, author of a little book of poems called *Wattle Blossoms and Wild Flowers*, and his sister, Mrs. E. A. Lauder, were among Gordon's first intimate friends in South Australia.' Humphris and Sladen print Edward's poem 'In Affectionate Memory of Adam Lindsay Gordon.' His sister told them: 'Gordon came over to our parts cattle-hunting and the swamps where he got lost and camped alone at our creek, Reddick, Beelish, South Australia, where he was a dear friend of ours for many years. My late father was a drill sergeant whom Gordon knew at home. So our home was a house of comfort to him – we all loved poetry and our beautiful bush; but we left that part without seeing poor Gordon. I left a letter in our tree we called our post office, but I don't suppose he ever got it. By a piece of poetry I read in *The Australasian*, I found out he was dead and no one here knew where he was buried until I found his dear baby's grave at Ballarat, and his at Brighton.'

Another friend, William Trainor, recalled in the *Bendigo Advertiser* June 1908: 'I came from America with Burton's circus in 1856 and we gave a performance at Penola. Being the "star" rider in the crowd, I was going to ride the "changeable" act. I don't know whether you've seen it. It is where a clown is thrown off a horse; a drunken man then enters the ring: that was me. I was ordered out by the ringmaster, who said I was not fit to ride. He then bundled me out of the ring. Just as he did so the sergeant of the police, who was standing outside the ring, caught hold of me by the back of the neck. I had a muffler on, and he nearly choked me. It was a beautiful moonlight night. I can see it as plainly as I can see today. The sergeant took me along the road, and we met another policeman.

'The sergeant said to him, "Lock this man up."

'He then let me go, and the other man took charge of me.

'I said, "I beg your pardon, but I am one of the performers."

'He wouldn't believe me, and only laughed.

"Oh, I know all about that," he said.

‘But then I unbuttoned my coat, and showed him my riding costume, and spangles, and all that, and I said “Look here, you must let me go back.”

‘Well, if I live a hundred years I will never forget it. He was a tall fellow, and he stood upright, threw his head back, and started to laugh out loud. He then took me back to the tent and let me go. That was my introduction to Gordon though I didn’t know him till afterward. Then we went horse-breaking together, and became very friendly. I don’t know why he took to me, because we were as opposite as the two poles in ability.’

Gordon gave Trainor the manuscript of ‘Verses inspired by ‘My Old Black Pipe’, in which Trainor is mentioned. Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh calls Trainor Gordon’s ‘most intimate friend.’ The friendship was a strong one. Not only did Trainor name his first born child Adam Lindsay Gordon Trainor, he purchased the adjoining grave to Gordon’s in Brighton cemetery, so that he could be buried beside him. His death notice in the *Age*, 4 June 1917, after listing his family members, declared: ‘intimate friend of the late Adam Lindsay Gordon.’ Back in England Charley Walker likewise named his son Lindsay. Gordon paid his own tribute, naming a horse Walker.

Trainor’s recollection may be inaccurate as to dates in saying he arrived in 1856, since Gordon had resigned from the police the previous year. George C. Scott, a fellow trooper, recalled the circumstances in the *Adelaide Register* 30 November 1912: ‘The police inspector (the late Mr G. B. Scot, afterwards Government Resident in the Northern Territory) lived at Penola, and one day asked for his horse, which was in the police paddock. Gordon brought the horse, and the inspector looked it over.

“Gordon,” he said, “those stirrup irons are very rusty.”

“Well sir,” replied Gordon, “I didn’t join as an officers’ groom.”

“Well, Gordon,” said the inspector quietly, “if you don’t like what you have to do you had better resign”

‘And Gordon did.’

According to Trainor in *The Australasian*, 27 April 1895: ‘That difficulty was smoothed over. But a little later Gordon was ordered to convey a woman of disreputable character a ride of sixty miles in custody, and resigned rather than fulfill the task.’

*The Argus*, 2 September 1924, reported: ‘An interesting centenarian died in Brisbane a few days ago in the person of Charles Mullaley, who was a

steepchaser of note in his younger days, and was a close companion of Adam Lindsay Gordon. He had reached the great age of 105 years, and in an interesting chat a little time before his death gave an interesting account of how Lindsay Gordon came to leave the South Australian police. Mullaley said he was breaking in horses on Livingstone's station at the time, and rode into Robe to look for help. While he was sitting on the verandah of the hotel talking to an inspector of the South Australian police Gordon came along dressed in uniform. Over the way there was a woman, the wife of a local resident, who was a little under the influence of liquor. The inspector ordered Gordon to put the woman in the lock-up, but Gordon thought she was not a case for the lock-up, and took her to her home. The inspector reprimanded Gordon for disobeying orders, and Mullaley, seeing that Gordon was dissatisfied, offered him work at the station. The outcome was that Gordon resigned, and went to break in horses with Mullaley at Livingstone's.'

In 'The Friend of Charley Walker' Elliott quotes two letters from the Archives, Public Library, Adelaide. 15 October 1855 the Commissioner of Police inquired: 'I should have been glad to know *why* so steady and efficient a Trooper should be dissatisfied and wish to leave this honorable employment.'

The inspector, George B. Scott, replied from Penola, 1 November. 'In answer to your Memo respecting the resignation of P. T. Gordon – I have the honour to inform you, that P. T. Gordon told me he intended to turn his attention to driving cattle to market. – I am not aware that he was dissatisfied with the Police Force, but I imagine he thinks it more lucrative to be a drover.'

'I am sorry to lose him, as he has conducted himself remarkably well while stationed here, which has been for a period of about eighteen months.'

Gordon resigned from the mounted police 4 November 1855, a week short of two years' service. He wrote to Charley Walker from Penola, October 1855: 'I have sent in my resignation. When I leave the force I shall be busy for a month or two with some young stock (colts) I want to get rid of and shall then D. V. be *again upon the seas for home*. I wonder if I shall find Jane married by the bye, I half expect to. To you I am neither afraid nor ashamed to own that I would marry her to-morrow if I had the chance and she would have me.'

He did not sail for home. Instead, as he wrote to Walker, January 1857: 'I have been working on my own account since, to wit, stock-jobbing, i.e. trucking and dealing in horseflesh and bringing colts overland for myself.'

For the next seven years he was occupied in buying and selling and breaking in horses, travelling round the bush from station to station.



Henry Kendall's background was considerably less privileged and patrician than Clarke's or Gordon's. His grandfather, Thomas Kendall, was born in Lincolnshire in 1778. Originally a school-teacher, he responded to the call to be a missionary, and went to the Bay of Islands in New Zealand in 1814. He published some important early works on the Maori language. He also traded arms with the Maoris, left his wife, and aged forty-three set up house with the seventeen year old daughter of a Maori chieftain. He was suspended in 1823, 'a public disgrace to the sacred ministry,' the Rev Samuel Marsden told him.

Alexander Sutherland records in Turner and Sutherland that Thomas Kendall then spent some time in Chile, and his son Basil served in the Chilean navy. In 1827 he took up 1,280 acres of land at Ulladulla on the south coast of New South Wales and became a timber merchant in the cedar trade. He was drowned in a shipwreck at Shoalhaven aged fifty-one. His son Basil worked for a while as a clerk in the flour business in Sydney, and then settled on the Ulladulla property south of Sydney. In 1835 Basil married. According to the wedding certificate his wife was called Melinda Olivia Leonora McAllan; Melinda McNally according to her death certificate. She seems also to have been called Millinda, Metinda and Matilda, Bishop Reed notes in his doctoral thesis on Henry Kendall. The daughter of an Irish policeman, Patrick McNally, Melinda claimed descent from the Irish barrister, nationalist and informer, Leonard McNally (1750-1820). Sutherland writes of Leonard: 'For a year or more the United Irishmen hatched their plans at his table, when the Government turned its attention to him. He grew frightened, tried to discover how much had been revealed that would incriminate him, and thereby exposed himself unnecessarily. He was threatened with prosecution unless he gave all information in his power. In a moment of weakness, he told all he knew, and thenceforward was kept with cruel rigour hard up to the line he had chosen. Outwardly he was the confidential legal adviser of the rebels, their chosen advocate in all their trials, a declaimer in all quiet meetings of Irishmen against the Government, his mercurial tongue delighting the people and their leaders ... yet all the time, once a fortnight or so, he was supplying the government with secret information as to all that was being done or planned.' The song 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill' is ascribed to McNally, amongst other writers.

18 April 1839 twin sons were born to Melinda and Basil Kendall, in a bush hut or humpy at Kirmington a mile or so from where the town of Milton now stands, though Milton did not exist at the time. 'Basil Edward, registered first and named after his father, was apparently the elder. Thomas Henry was

named after his paternal grandfather,' A. G. Stephens writes in 'Kendall's Name and Age', *Bulletin*, 21 August 1929. On various occasions in later years Henry Kendall would shave a couple of years off his age and say he was born in 1841 or 2. But he wasn't. In such poems as 'Araluen', 'Illa Creek', and 'Kiama', collected in his first book, Kendall was to record his response to the beauty of the country south of Sydney where he spent his early years. A memorial cairn to Kendall was erected at his birthplace by students of Milton Public School in 1913, and the day was celebrated as Kendall Day. The stone cairn was eventually dismantled and the stones used for a creek crossing. It was replaced with a sandstone monument in 1972.

In 1845 the family moved to northern New South Wales around Grafton and the Clarence and Orara rivers. Basil became a shepherd at Gordon Brook station, another auspiciously poetical name, perhaps, between Copmanhurst and Yulgibar. They were there for twelve months after which Basil moved to Grafton and kept a school. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported 29 December 1847: 'Basil Kendall was indicted for that he, on the 16th October, did feloniously utter a forged order on the Commercial Bank for £5 with intent to defrauded certain people trading under the name of Patrick and Son. The prisoner pleaded guilty and was remanded for sentence.' 2 January 1848 it reported that he was imprisoned with hard labour for two years. 12 October 1852 his death was recorded: 'At South Grafton on the 23rd September Mr Basil Kendall of consumption. Aged 42 years.' Melinda and her five children returned south and she kept a day school at Fairy Meadow, near Wollongong.

What education Kendall received seems to have been from his parents, who both at various times kept schools. He always acknowledged his mother's love of literature. She wrote verse herself and is said to have published a volume. His twin brother Basil wrote and published verse, too.

'In the year 1855 I went for a trip to the South Sea Islands. The vessel, a barque, was commanded by an uncle of mine,' Kendall wrote in 'A Fight with a Devil Fish,' *Australasian* 5 June 1869. Kendall's Uncle Joseph was master of the brig *Plumstead*; but Kendall calls the ship the *Waterwitch* in 'A Cruise amongst the South Sea Islands' in *The Australasian*, 7 May 1870. In his edition of Kendall's letters Donovan Clarke established from the maritime records that the whaling ship *Waterwitch* was under the command of Captain William Lee, and that Kendall was back in Sydney by March 1857. He possibly served on both ships during his eighteen months at sea as an apprentice.

Marcus Clarke wrote in the *Leader* supplement, 19 March 1881:

‘Whether he visited Omoo or landed at Typee is uncertain, but it is more than probable that he talked with Steelkit and Daggoo, and caught a glimpse of Moby Dick breaching immortally to broad heaven.’ ‘The wonderful islands of the South Pacific are mirrored in my memory yet,’ Kendall wrote to Joseph Sheridan Moore, 29 June 1877.

Returned to Sydney, he lived with his mother and family in a cottage which backed on to the old Camperdown cemetery, Michael Ackland writes in *Henry Kendall: the Man and the Myths*. A. G. Stephens recorded in ‘Kendalliana - IV’ in *The Bulletin*, 9 July 1930: ‘Louisa Lawson searched earnestly for Kendalliana. She found an old employee of Biddell Brothers, the Sydney confectioners, for whom he worked as errand-boy when he came back to Sydney from sea, a lad of eighteen. This man told her that Kendall used to be sent out with a tray of tarts and cakes, which he learned to carry on his head, through the streets of Sydney. Already he was composing juvenile poetry, and, as he walked along, with half-seeing eyes fixed in a vacant stare, you could see his mouth working as he mumbled over his lines. People would turn and look at him: “There goes Mad Harry!”’

In 1859 Kendall’s first poem published, ‘O, tell me, ye breezes’ appeared, somewhat poignantly in view of his later life, in ‘a journal for the promotion of temperance’, the *Australian Home Companion and Band of Hope*. Others soon followed in the daily *Empire* and, from 1861, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. December 1859 appeared *Silent Tears. A Song of Affection, the words by H. Kendall (A Native Poet) the music composed by George Peck, leader and musical director to the Prince of Wales Theatre &c. Sydney published at Peck’s Music Repository*. It was engraved and printed by John Degotardi, and sold for two shillings and sixpence. George Peck was the composer of ‘Australian Masonic Waltzes’. It was reprinted in the *Empire*, signed H. Kendall, N. A. P. The *Empire* commented: ‘We are puzzled as to the signification of the mystic letters – if we read them correctly, it would be more unassuming to omit them!’

The *Empire* had been established and edited by Henry Parkes in 1850, but financial difficulties forced him to cease publication in August 1858. Parkes went bankrupt, with liabilities exceeding £53,000. Kendall did not meet Parkes until 1863, according to A. W. Martin in *Henry Parkes: A Biography*. When the *Empire* resumed publication in May 1859 it was under the ownership of William Hanson and Samuel Bennett. Ackland’s biography records that Kendall’s sister Josephine became a governess to Hanson’s family in 1863, and for a while Kendall was in love with Bennett’s daughter Rose, who inspired his poem ‘Rose Lorraine.’

In due course Kendall became disillusioned with the *Empire*. He wrote to Joseph Sheridan Moore, 9 September 1864: 'How I hate that paper! How I detest the lot that are on it: from the mealy mouthed shopman upward to Hanson and that fiddle-faced imposter Bennett. Why are they and men like Fairfax allowed to trample on the head of Genius? Some day yet I shall take my proper place in the world of letters.'



By the end of his twenty-first year, 1860, Kendall had published twenty-one poems and made contact with Sydney literary society. Through the *Empire* he came to meet Joseph Sheridan Moore, the son of a Dublin lawyer, who had been educated at Stonyhurst and had come to Australia aged twenty in 1848. Moore was a writer and teacher, for a while a Benedictine monk and headmaster of Lyndhurst College in Glebe, leaving the order in 1856 and marrying in 1857. He introduced Kendall to the literary circle of the lawyer and bibliophile and former friend of Thomas De Quincey, Nicol Stenhouse, who lived in Balmain; it included the poet and politician Daniel Deniehy who had been articled to Stenhouse, and Dr John Woolley, who had been appointed the first principal of the University of Sydney in preference to the poet Arthur Hugh Clough. Sutherland writes in Turner and Sutherland: 'There was at that time no Public Library in Sydney, and the kindly doctor did a great service to the young poet by securing for him an entry whenever he liked into the University Library.' Woolley also offered Kendall the chance to take an Arts course at the university for free, but Kendall declined on the grounds he had to earn a living. Stenhouse's library of 4,000 volumes was donated to the University of Sydney in 1878.

Moore had edited *The Month*, the journal Frank Fowler established in July 1857, after Fowler returned to England to escape his creditors; it closed in December 1858. James Tyrell quotes Moore's description of Fowler: 'a brilliant talker, a sparkling wit, and the most genial companion that ever drank your wine, or borrowed half-a-sovereign.' Moore later edited the *Tamworth Examiner*, and helped found the *Sydney University Magazine* and the *University Review*. Deniehy had established the *Southern Cross*, 'a weekly journal of politics, literature and social progress' in October 1859, and Kendall contributed a poem on the wreck of the *Dunbar*. Kendall later recalled in 'About Some Members of a Colonial Literary Dinner Party,' *Australasian*, 2 April 1870: 'One newspaper in particular (the *Southern Cross*) edited by the late Mr Deniehy, and contributed to by some of the most brilliant men of

letters we have ever had on this side of the equator, sparkled from the first to the last column with evidences of the singular literary power it had at its command.' It survived less than a year.

Moore's encouragement prompted Kendall to publish his first book, *Poems and Songs*. It was advertised in the *Empire* and *Sydney Morning Herald* in January 1861: 'THE MUSE OF AUSTRALIA – In preparation for Publication (by subscription), THE POEMS AND SONGS OF HENRY KENDALL, the boy-poet of Australia. At the request of several literary and influential gentlemen, and after a severe critical examination of the work, MR SHERIDAN MOORE has consented to superintend the publication. So convinced is he of its merit that he has no fear of commending it to the taste and patriotism of the country. Subscription Lists lie at several book and music dealers, in town and country.'

14 August the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported a lecture by Moore at the School of Arts: 'The lecturer, in conclusion, made an earnest appeal on behalf of Australian poetic genius, and urged the claims of Mr Henry Kendall, for aid in the publication of whose works he intended shortly to give an entertainment at the School of Arts.'



There are a number of recollections of Gordon in his horse-breaking years. A 'travelling correspondent of the Melbourne *Leader*' recalled his first meeting with him in 'Adam Lindsay Gordon: Justice to the Memory of the Bush Poet. The Facts of his Life and Death,' in *The Press*, Christchurch, 23 September 1891: 'I was riding along a road near Digby, in Normanby, when I saw a tall man with a cabbage-tree hat, corduroy pantaloons, blue shirt, and Wellington boots jump his horse over the fence and gallop up to me. He knew who I was, although I did not know him, and he asked me a number of questions about Melbourne, which he had never visited, and about the expense of publishing a volume of poems, which he had told me he had written. We rode together, till near the Rifle Downs station, where we parted, and he made in the direction of Glenelg. He had mentioned his name to me, and I afterwards found that he was well known in the neighbourhood, and especially all around Mount Gambier.'

In *The Australasian*, 14 July 1906, Owen Meylett published 'Some Gordon Reminiscences' from Horace Tolmer: 'After Gordon left the police he started as a horse-breaker, and one job he undertook was to break in 173 colts, of the ES brand, for E. Stockdale of Lake Hawdon. Mr Tolmer, then a boy of



14 years, assisted him. Gordon's favourite costume was a jumper, and he always wore jockey boots inside his trousers of close-fitting pilot cloth. He wore his trousers short, the wrinkle of his boots showing below. He appeared to be very slow in putting on a bridle or tackling; but really got it on quicker than other men. He always wore a little soft pad, made of basil, on the pommel of the saddle when he rode. During all the time Mr Tolmer was breaking-in horses with him he never saw Gordon thrown.'

Harry Stockdale recalled Gordon in *The Argus*, 17 May 1919: 'I knew Adam Lindsay Gordon well in the sixties, when we were both employed on my uncle Edward's cattle and horse station – Lake Hawdon, near Guichen Bay, S. A. Into the following notes I have put my memories of one of the best and bravest men I ever knew.

'Gordon was distinctly a good-looking man; when animated, with his head thrown back and his dark-grey eyes sparkling, he struck you as remarkably handsome. At such times his bearing was proud and dignified, and he carried himself splendidly. He was not always particular how he dressed: his clothes were usually very unpretentious. His old Melbourne friends would scarcely recognize him by his clean-shaven South Australian photograph (the one most often seen); for in Victoria he wore his reddish beard. His hair was dark brown, inclining to reddish.

'He was very short-sighted and very sensitive about his short sight. On many occasions, when out horse-hunting at Old Lake Hawden Station (bringing in the colts for market or branding) on hearing any of the party sing out, "There they are," he would almost instantly remark, "Yes. I see them. Yes, there's a grey amongst them." "Gordon's grey one" used to be a standing joke (in his absence) on the station. For there was hardly a mob of E. S. horses without a grey one.

'E. S. stood for Edward Stockdale, for whom Gordon and I worked together for years. Later he acquired a little farm home, "Dingley Dell", where I spent many happy days with him. Cape Northumberland, where the *Admella* was wrecked in 1865, was not far away. I have heard it doubted whether Gordon's poem "From the Wreck" describes his own experience, and I answer Yes, he describes his own ride with the news of a disaster that shocked Australia at the time

'When at home on the farm Gordon wrote a good deal in a very irregular fashion on all sorts and sizes of paper – old envelopes, bills, and so on. He was always inclined to brood; sometimes I thought he was a little superstitious.

‘The episode of the horse race which was really the thing that brought him to this country has been told several times. His own story, as told to me, was that he and Tom Oliver had shares or were halves in a horse he was going to ride in a steeplechase. The horse was seized by the bailiff for a debt of Oliver’s and Gordon in his headstrong way, took possession of it by force. This turned out to be a grave legal offence which caused some trouble before it was settled.

‘When Gordon was in the S. A. mounted police he was riding from the south-east to Adelaide and had to cross a narrow neck of the ninety mile-desert, lying between the Wellington crossing of the River Murray and the Glenelg. He got a bad sunstroke. He was travelling in the company of Mr Young, afterwards governor of the Mount Gambier Gaol, and he considered that but for Mr Young’s presence and help he might have lost his life. Gordon’s head, all through his career, had too much knocking about.

‘Gordon might be described as the soul of truth. He scorned a liar, holding that a liar was lower than a thief. He was an extremely modest man, and especially respectful to all women, rich or poor ...

‘When we were at Mount Gambier Gordon I and I paid several visits to the Blue Lake in the early morning. Gordon would tackle and enjoy the steepest and most dangerous descent. (I always went down the safest way I could find.) Once at the bottom he would strip off and plunge into the blue black water – often nearly as cold as ice, and keep in so long that when he came out his flesh was all goosey and his teeth chattered. Sometimes he was so cold he could hardly talk but he always maintained it was glorious. (I let him have all the glory and the chattering to himself).

‘Gordon was always a good worker, early riser, and a regular all weathers early bather. At Robe town I have seen him swim out until you lost sight of him amongst the waves, while I paddled about hip deep close in shore. In everything this man did he was different from other people. He seemed a law unto himself.

‘I was present on the now historic night when the Rev J. Tenison Woods came to Old Lake Hawdon station and sat talking with Gordon till past midnight. They talked of their favourite authors – of home associations and schoolboy days – Gordon regretting that he had not gone into the army, where he would have had an aim in life congenial to his inclination. Tenison Woods said it was at one of the English universities that the whole tenor of his life was changed through coming in touch with the famous Newman. Prior to this I understood him to say he belonged to the English Church.

'They also talked of the antiquity of man and either soon after or just before, Tenison Woods delivered a lecture at Robe on the same subject. Gordon that night said "Look here Father, what does it matter. Old or young it all comes to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die."

'Gordon and Woods were both at times lighthearted and gay with occasional relapses into grave moods, as though their thoughts were far away. They left the impression upon me that in each life the past held a shadow.'

There are drawings by Harry Stockdale of Gordon on Outlaw, in the National Library, and on Cadger, in the Mitchell. Paintings of the Blue Lake by Hans Heysen and Dingley Dell by Will Ashton are in Vidler's *Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial Volume*.



W. Park Low's papers preserve another newspaper cutting: 'Adam Lindsay Gordon, Poet, scholar and horseman. Personal reminiscences by Harry Stockdale': 'I remember on one occasion Gordon coming to the old Lake Station late at night, and, of course, remaining. I was in a room with two small iron bedsteads. Gordon soon occupied the other. There was a chair between the two bed heads with a lamp. I was deeply interested in Tom Hood's "Miss Kilmansegg and her Golden Leg," when Gordon after lighting a pipe, begged me to read aloud. I read somewhat about a couple of hundred lines. The peculiar metre seemed to tickle his fancy so much that on leaving off Gordon immediately repeated the whole verbatim; and as he was previously unacquainted with the poem it was, to say the least, a wonderful example of the powerful retentiveness of his memory. Shortly after breakfast next morning he left us, and did not return for some two or three months afterwards, when I asked him had he forgotten "Miss Kilmansegg." He said he was afraid he had; but on my reaching down the book and reading about a dozen lines to him, he commenced and finished the lot almost as easily as he had done on the first occasion. Gordon was, for an educated man, the worst reader I ever heard, and he was quite conscious of his failing, remarking that his mother, who was a most accomplished reader, had been driven almost to despair trying to make him even passable in that particular line, but had at last given him up as a hopeless case. His style was more like singing than reading, and very unpleasant to listen to, but he was very partial to being read to, and would listen for hours to my reading Scott, Byron's *Childe Harold*, or Shelley.

‘Gordon at this time used to dress in drab-coloured breeches and knee-boots, his neck bound round by several turns of a large black silk kerchief, with seldom if ever a collar.’

Major-General Thomas Bland Strange recalled Gordon’s memory as a schoolboy in *Gunner Jingo’s Jubilee*: ‘Setting aside a fair amount of caning over the hand, the principal punishment was the committal to memory of twenty to fifty lines of Virgil or Homer. This was a laborious task to most of us, but to Gordon it was nothing, since his surprising memory enabled him to recite his lines after one of two perusals.’

In ‘Personal Reminiscence of Adam Lindsay Gordon,’ *Melbourne Review*, April 1884, Julian Tenison Woods recalled an occasion in 1860: ‘We were overtaken by a severe storm and lost our way. Night came on, and the rain poured down in torrents. As my sight at night was nearly as defective as Gordon’s we gave up looking for the track, and sat crouched under a tree waiting for the rising of the moon. We were both miserably cold and hungry, and it was most ludicrous to hear my companion reciting long passages from various authors on the subject of storms. We could not light a fire, and I only had to shiver while he gave me the tempest scene in *King Lear*, which he knew by heart. He was much amused when I asked him whether he would like a nice drink of cold spring water after his exertions. We got to a station about midnight and had to share the same room; but Gordon would not go to bed. The warm tea we had had at supper had revived him, and he kept walking up and down the supper room reciting *Childe Harold* till near morning.’

Tenison Woods shows no amazement at Gordon’s memory, having inherited and developed a similar memory himself, his first biographer, George O’Neill, records.